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SUBJECT: JMST BRIEFING FOCUSES ON SECURITY AND CONSULTATIONS WITH
JEM AND ABDUL WAHID

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In an April 19 briefing to Khartoum's Ambassadors, Salim Ahmed Salim and Jan Eliasson (the African Union and United Nations Special Envoys for Darfur) stated that their most recent visit to Sudan focused on security concerns. According to Salim and Eliasson, consultations with representatives from the Government of Sudan (GoS), opposition political parties, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudan Liberation Army faction led by Abdul Wahid Al-Nur (SLA/AW) revealed that almost all parties agree that security considerations should take precedence and that this focus could serve as a starting place for future negotiations. Eliasson and Salim stated that SLA/AW continues to set a "minimal level of security" as a condition for talks, while JEM continues to entertain grandiose and dangerous dreams of military options and believe that "it is the only group in town." END SUMMARY.

SECURITY FIRST

¶2. (SBU) Salim started the briefing saying that the situation in Darfur has deteriorated significantly in recent months and that the focus of the JMST and peace process should be on security. He stated that violence has taken different forms in the recent months including: fighting between the GOS and rebel movements; clashes between rebel groups; and banditry and other criminal (including the recent Arab militia/janjaweed violence against Government forces.)

¶3. (SBU) Eliasson said that that he is hopeful that this focus on security will eventually lead to a cessation of hostilities and a discussion of other issues. He said that SLA/AW is particularly keen on this focus on security, as "they have consistently stated that they have wanted this." According to Salim, SLA/AW commanders stated that attaining a minimal level of security is a condition for all negotiations.

¶3. (SBU) Eliasson supported Salim's introductory remarks, saying that it is essential to bring down the level of hostility and violence and create a suitable environment before any future talks. He called this period before the raining season "crucial" and stated that all international partners present at the briefing must exert their influence on all parties involved in the conflict, especially those who have special pull with Chad and Sudan. He emphasized that the World Food Program will be forced to reduce rations by 50% in May due to banditry and that this will have a "major impact on security and become a major problem for all of us."

¶4. (SBU) Eliasson said that there are three major elements of security that merit scrutiny: building a framework for the cessation of hostilities; improving humanitarian access and reducing the levels of banditry and crime; and supporting the relationship between UNAMID and the GoS. Regarding the lattermost point,

Eliasson said that there needs to be better cooperation between UNAMID and the GoS, and that senior Sudanese officials have indicated that they value UNAMID's work in Darfur. UNAMID also needs to coordinate better with rebel groups, who "are feeling ignored" by UNAMID.

15. (SBU) Salim also emphasized that he is concerned about UNAMID's overall deployment saying that "we hope that there will be more urgent work in the UNSCR to implement that which has been agreed upon." He questioned, "Why can't we get 26 helicopters and more troops on the ground now?" The Dutch Ambassador to Khartoum later inquired whether UNAMID was prepared to monitor a cessation of hostilities agreement, noting that this had been a problem at previous negotiations. Eliasson stated that "we knew we did not have the capacity to monitor the cessation of hostilities at Sirte, but we will work to build up this capacity." He noted that given the size of Darfur and delays in deployment, it will be tough to develop a reliable monitoring body.

SLA/AW'S and JEM'S CONDITIONS

16. (SBU) Eliasson said that the two major rebel movements both have set conditions for future talks. He stated that SLA/AW continues to insist that before negotiations begin a "minimum level of security be met." He stated that JEM "will be more difficult to work with" as it still entertains military options and considers itself the only real rebel group in Darfur. Salim also emphasized that discussions with representatives from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) were "constructive but with some difficulties." According to Salim, JEM believes that it is "the only force in town and that we should forget about all others." Salim urged the international community to encourage JEM to continue to work with UNAMID.

17. (SBU) CDA Fernandez asked whether Salim and Eliasson emphasized

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to JEM and the GoS the importance of avoiding a cycle of destructive fighting similar to that which occurred in early 2008. Eliasson responded that he raised the issue of the GoS's "excessive use of force" two times with senior GoS officials. He said he also raised this point with JEM and added that there are "dangerous signs" coming from JEM, especially as it attempts to link the crisis in Darfur with neighboring Kordofan. Salim agreed, stating "JEM is trying to bring Kordofan into the mix and that is complicating things."

BRITISH INITIATIVE

18. (SBU) Asked about the British initiative, Salim responded that he was not consulted prior to Prime Minister Gordon Brown's announcement, but that he considers it to be a sign of support for the peace process and symbolic of Britain's good will and intention. The UK's Ambassador stated that the UK is "ready to host talks if that would be useful" and that the Prime Minister's remarks demonstrate his "strong personal commitment to this issue." POLITICAL PARTIES, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND SUDAN CONSORTIUM

19. (SBU) Salim and Eliasson were also asked about their consultations with political parties. Eliasson stated that they met with all the major parties, and that it is obvious that the majority of these opposition groups view the Darfur crisis as inseparable from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Sudan as a whole. Eliasson said that he agrees that there is "mutual dependence" between Darfur and the rest of Sudan and that future negotiations require a holistic approach, but that UNAMID's mandate is restricted to Darfur. Eliasson stated that although the focus of this trip was on security, that UNAMID Civil Affairs continues its important work. He said that there is "rough agreement" regarding the role and participation of tribal leaders in future talks, but that there is "unease" regarding the selection and representation of IDP leaders.

110. (SBU) The Norwegian Ambassador reminded attendees that the Sudan Consortium will be held in Oslo from May 5-7. He said that there will be a special session on Darfur on May 5 that both the GoSS and GNU have accepted this meeting. He said that this is an

opportunity to address the Government of Sudan and its senior leaders such as Salva Kiir and Ali Osman Taha, and that the international community should send appropriate high-level representatives to the meeting. Eliasson said that this was the first he had heard of this invitation, and although it is unlikely that he will be present, other JMST representatives will try to attend.

NO PROGRESS ON CHIEF MEDIATOR

¶11. (SBU) Salim stated that there has been no progress on selecting an individual for the chief mediator position. He said that there "is no rush to volunteer for the job" and that the individual they had identified for the position did not accept it. He said they need someone who is sufficiently sensitive, sufficiently high profile, and ready to spend a lot of time on the ground ("even someone who will eat breakfast with the rebels everyday for six months.") He stated that selecting a chief mediator will not be a magical cure for the peace process.

COMMENT

¶12. COMMENT: Unfortunately, the most significant pieces of Eliasson's and Salim's briefing were all negative: rations to IDPs will be cut by half; UNAMID views JEM as uncooperative and inclined to aggressive military action, including into Kordofan; and SLA/AW continues to set the vaguely-defined condition of minimal security as a condition for talks. Salim and Eliasson appeared content to talk in generalities, avoiding defining what "minimal security" would mean, or exactly how JEM sees itself leading negotiations. Salim, Eliasson, and the JMST also appear to be passively waiting for a joint mediator, more UNAMID troops on the ground, and the "suitable environment for negotiations." They appear disconnected from international initiatives such as the Sudan Consortium and the UK's willingness to host talks. All these things, along with their return to what went wrong at Sirte (e.g. "it was out of our hands"), leaves one with little faith for progress in the peace process in the coming months with this current, part-time team of dilettantes. Additional meetings with the JMST and suggested next steps will be reported septel.

FERNANDEZ